

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 01726 031928Z

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SUBJECT: MINDEF AVEROFF CHALLENGES PAPANDREOU'S CHARGES OF
FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN FEBRUARY 24 CONSPIRACY

REF: ATHENS 1694

1. SUMMARY: IN PRESS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 28 MINISTER OF
DEFENSE AVEROFF DENIED ALLEGATIONS BY PASOK LEADER PAPANDREOU
THAT NATO, CIA AND PENTAGON WERE INVOLVED IN LAST WEEK'S MILITARY
CONSPIRACY AND CHALLENGED PAPANDREOU TO PROVIDE CORROBORATIVE
INFORMATION. AVEROFF LATER DURING WEEKENED ISSUED PRESS STATEMENT
SIMILAR TO EARLIER REASSURING STATEMENTS THAT NEW RUMORS OF
UPRISING IN CADET SCHOOL WERE COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION ON FEBRUARY 28 OF MILITARY
CONSPIRACY (ATHENS 1694), MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF MET WITH
PRESS CORPS. AVEROFF REAFFIRMED THAT NO MOVEMENT TOOK PLACE IN ANY
MILITARY GARRISON OR UNIT IN CONNECTION WITH THE "ABORTIVE
CONSPIRACY" AND THAT FROM THE BEGINNING THE ARMY, IN OBEYING THE
GOVERNMENT, REVEALED NOT ONLY DISCIPLINE BUT A CHANGE OF MENTALITY.

"WE ARE NOT SO NAIVE AS TO BELIEVE THAT THERE WERE NO EXCEPTIONS.
THERE WERE INDEED EXCEPTIONS--SOME WHO WERE PUNISHED AND THOSE

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PAGE 02 ATHENS 01726 031928Z

WHO WERE TO BE RETIRED FROM THE SERVICE." AVEROFF NOTED THAT THE

GOVERNMENT ALLOWED THE CONSPIRACY TO "MATURE" KNOWING IT PLANNED TO CARRY OUT SOME "DARING ACTIONS" BETWEEN FEBRUARY 25 AND MARCH 8. MINISTER OF DEFENSE ADDED THAT "IF ONE THINKS THAT FOR SEVEN YEARS THOUSANDS OF OFFICERS HAD UNDERGONE BRAINWASHING, AND TODAY ONLY A FEW DOZEN TOOK PART IN THE (CONSPIRACY) MOVEMENT, THEN THIS IS PROOF THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE IN A HEALTHY CONDITION."

3. AFTER RESTATING THAT THE ARRESTS WERE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT DIFFICULTIES, AVEROFF NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT ORDERED AN ALERT IN MILITARY UNITS AT ATHENS, THESSALONIKI AND LARISSA IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THESE ARRESTS. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY ON FOREIGN INTERVENTION, AND SPECIFICALLY THE INVOLVEMENT OF NATO, CIA OR THE PENTAGON AS ALLEGED BY ANDREAS PAPANDREOU (PASOK), AVEROFF SAID "I HAVE NOT THE LEAST INDICATION OF ANY SUCH FOREIGN INTERVENTION. HOWEVER, I HAVE NO OBJECTION TO ASKING PAPANDREOU IF HE HAS SUCH INFORMATION." THE MINISTER CONCLUDED BY COMMENTING THAT THE CONSPIRATORS DID NOT HAVE AN ASSASSINATION LIST NOR DID THEY HAVE FINANCIAL MEANS. HE SAID THAT THE CONSPIRATORS WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED AND PROPER MEASURES FOR CLEANSING "CANCEROUS GROWTHS" FROM THE MILITARY WILL BE COMPLETED WITHIN 45 DAYS.

4. IN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF AT MIDNIGHT MARCH 2 ISSUED DENIAL OF A RUMOR REGARDING AN UPRISING AT THE CADET SCHOOL. AVEROFF REASSURED THAT ABSOLUTE CALM PREVAILED AT THE CADET SCHOOL IN ATHENS AND ADDED THAT HE SUSPECTED THAT SUCH RUMORS ARE CIRCULATED "DELIVERATELY."

5. COMMENT: AVEROFF'S MIDNIGHT PUBLIC REASSURANCE IS INDICATIVE OF THE CONTINUED CHURNING OF THE RUMOR MILL IN ATHENS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSPIRACY. ATHENIANS AS WELL AS GREEKS IN THE PROVINCES, MANY OF WHOM ARE BLESSED WITH OVERLY RESOURCEFUL IMAGINATIONS, CONTINUE TO CONCOCT FANCINFUL STORIES OF WHAT THE CONSPIRATORS WERE PLANNING, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLOTTING TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND NEW REPORTS OF UNREST IN THE ARMED FORCES.
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